

The Sovereign House

The Charles Sovereign / Mazo de la Roche Heritage Display Centre, is usually referred to just as The Sovereign House.

This solid Ontario farm house was built by Charles Sovereign, as his family's home. It was constructed in stages between 1825 and 1846. Charles built on his father's farm, where the family had settled in 1814. The land may have been in part a grant for service in the war of 1812. When the family arrived here, the lands surrounding the mouths of the major creeks were still reserved for the local First Nations people. Bronte and Oakville had yet to be surveyed for settlement.

Charles Sovereign held a certain status in the community. He was a Justice of the Peace and a School Inspector. He operated a modest mixed-use farm. What was unusual for a farmer, was that for fifty years he found time to keep a journal and account book, and just as remarkable is that these books survived to the present day. His short journal entries give a picture of the house and family over the years, and also glimpses into the lives of his neighbours. The journals have recently been microfilmed. Selected pages have already been transcribed, but a complete transcription will soon be undertaken by the Bronte Historical Society.

Mazo de la Roche lived in the house for about five years, prior to her becoming a famous novelist. She made her reputation with the *Whiteoaks of Jalna* family sagas.

In 1988 new owners applied for a demolition permit. The Bronte Historical Society presented the town with historical evidence to support designation. The Town, with financial assistance promised by the Society, moved the house from Shoreline Drive to Bronte Bluffs, Town-owned parkland. It was agreed that rather than being restored to the 1846 configuration, the house would be renovated to approximate a 1910 appearance.

The management of the house was turned over to the Bronte Historical Society in 1995. The house opened to the public in 1996. It is open on Saturdays, Sundays and Wednesdays from late May to late October. Admission by donation. The exhibits are changed annually. To help defray costs, the north wing is dedicated to a series of art shows by local artists titled *Art on the Bluffs*.